

Literature Circles

This cooperative learning strategy is based on the idea that students can learn how to read, discuss, and write critically about a text through independent, "self-sponsored" interactions--that is, by having some choice about what to read, what to discuss, and how to respond to each other.

Typically, literature circles are small groups which meet regularly to discuss a book. Individually, students read and take notes or write responses in preparation for discussion. Then, each time they meet, students in the group take on roles which involve responsibility for particular parts of the group's discussion. Here is an explanation of those roles and how they relate to our class's groupwork roles:



Relationship of Groupwork Roles to Lit Circle Roles (and Conversation Moves)

Our class roles (during group tasks)	Literature Circles roles (during discussion)	Conversational moves
Team Captain --makes sure everyone contributes --makes sure class norms are upheld --makes sure the group reaches necessary consensus on decisions	Discussion Director --makes sure everyone contributes --makes sure class norms are upheld --makes sure that all ideas are both supported and challenged	Managing participation in discussion "I'd like to hear from _____ on this topic." "Is that really the best way for us to _____?" "Does anyone want to agree/disagree?"
Facilitator --asks questions that help elaborate and deepen ideas --makes sure time is managed successfully	Questioner --asks follow-up questions that help elaborate and deepen interpretations of the text --makes sure the group sets goals for reading and manages time during discussion activities	Managing the quality of discussion "Can you give us an example?" ("Take it to the text!") "How much should we read for next time?" "Are we ready to move on to the next step?"
Recorder/Reporter --makes sure the group's final product is organized and complete --makes sure relationships among the group's ideas are made explicit	Summarizer --keeps a record of the group's discussion --points out connections among group members' comments	Managing the direction of the discussion "Like last week, today we've talked about _____." "How does what _____ just said relate to what you've been saying?"
Resource Manager --makes sure the group has what it needs to complete the task --is the only person who can call the teacher over for a <u>group</u> question	Citation Manager --makes sure that all members of the group are prepared with notes/responses --points out particular moments of the text (or related materials to support or provoke further discussion)	Managing the possibilities for discussion "What was one part of the text you marked for us to talk about?" "What did you think of this: _____?"

Typical Routine for Literature Circles:

Beginning

- Individual group members have read as far in the book as the group had decided
- Individual group members have marked passages (with marginal notes or post-its), written journal responses, and noted questions
- Citation Manager makes sure that everyone is prepared to participate; calls for each group member to share one topic/quote s/he would like to discuss
- Summarizer suggests relationships among the topics, possible direction for discussion; group members vote and agree on an agenda
- Questioner makes sure time is allocated to fulfill that agenda

Middle

- Discussion Director opens the discussion, encourages participation
- Questioner asks follow-up questions
- Citation Manager suggests quotes/topics
- Summarizer takes notes, suggests connections

End

- Summarizer shares his/her representation of the group's discussion; group members sign off or make suggestions
- Discussion Director asks group to consider how discussion could be improved
- Questioner makes sure group sets goals for next week's reading

___ For this meeting, we read to _____
(if not, please explain; if this is the first meeting, write down what you plan to have read for next time)

___ All group members had prepared by _____
(if not, please explain; if this is the first meeting, discuss how you will prepare and write down your ideas here)

___ This time, the following people were responsible for:
Discussion Director _____
Questioner _____
Citation Manager _____
Summarizer _____

___ All members made sure these roles were fulfilled:

(group member signatures)

___ This time, the Summarizer represented our work by _____
(please attach to this sheet, if possible)

___ We discussed how our work could be improved and our goals for next time are _____